

## Conversation in the Classroom

Put students in pairs. Give each student a different scenario. Student A tries to communicate his/her scenario to Student B in Arabic. Student B draws or writes in English as much as they can (on a whiteboard). Students then switch roles. When they finish, they return their scenarios to the pile at the front of the room and are given a new one. Students are encouraged to communicate “thought for thought, not word for word” and are allowed to use sound effects and gestures to help their partners understand. No dictionaries allowed.

I circulate and whisper hints in their ears. I have to frequently tell them, “If you don’t know how to say it, chances are that your partner won’t either. What else could you try?”

I model all of this for them by presenting a really expressive version of the scenario that follows—OUT OF ORDER—so that students can see that one needn’t translate word for word. The demo is designed to encourage even the weakest of students to attempt the assignment. (This activity was originally designed for Spanish I students who had just completed their first semester and who had been exposed to regular verbs and to common irregular verbs including verbs with irregular *yo* forms). Students who have a reasonable understanding of verbs will be able to use much more sophisticated sentences than those provided in the following example.

## THE DINOSAUR

(big, green, old animal)

(I see it in)

A **dinosaur** has just hatched from an old egg you **found** in the back of

(cold place where all the food is) (I don’t know if a lot of time or a little)  
back of your **refrigerator**. You have no idea **how long** it has been there,

(ring, ring - sound)

but obviously, it must have been there for awhile! Call the

(Mr. Museum)

(What does the animal eat?)

**museum curator** and explain the situation. Ask them *what to feed*

(Where does the animal go . . . in the house, in the park, in car?)  
It, **where to put it**,

(When you come here?)

and **when they can come** to get it.

(Is it going to be big?)

(Problems with the animal? Ouch?)

Find out **how fast it will grow** and **if it will hurt you**. Ask them what you should do if you find another egg in your fridge and whether

(no electricity—no cold air—is that good?)

or not you should just **defrost** the freezer and turn off the

(Is it a good idea? I don’t want to have more problems.)  
refrigerator for awhile as a **precaution**.

## **SAMPLE SITUATIONS**

### **The Bottle**

You are trapped inside a pop bottle and you cannot get out. Your feet are getting wet because there is still some pop left in the bottle. You are cold because the bottle is still in the refrigerator. You are running out of air because the lid is still on the bottle. Unfortunately, the next person who opens the fridge (your partner) is an alien who has never seen a pop bottle before. Explain to the alien that you want him to take the bottle out of the fridge and that he must get you out. Whatever you do, be sure that the alien understands that he will hurt you if he breaks the bottle by giving you a headache or a cut from the broken glass.

### **The Number**

One morning, you wake up and find that you are a number. Your name is Three Five Seven. You live in a math book with your family. You have a terrible life. Human people are always using you. They put you together with other numbers and take you away from your friends. Sometimes they divide you in half and sometimes they make more of you. You get confused when they make you twins. You get really tired of being plastered on the clocks and having the hands run over you ever sixty seconds. One of the worst things about being a number is that people are always calling your name. You are never sure which person wants or needs you most. You and your friends all hate Two.

### **The Purple Elephant**

There is a purple elephant outside your window. He is sniffing your garden, looking for food. Call the zoo, explain the situation, and ask if the elephant is sick. Find out if the elephant will hurt you and if it is afraid of mice. Don't forget to explain that you have a live mice collection in your living room.

### **The Man-Eating Flower**

You are trapped inside a flower. You have asthma and can't breathe. Explain to a passing bumblebee that you tried to get a butterfly to help you, but that she was too snobby and said that she was too delicate for such matters. Tell the bumblebee that you know that he is much stronger than the lazy butterfly and see if he will get someone to rescue you by cutting the flower down and prying it open.

### **The Monster**

You are in a psychiatrist's office because you have a terrible problem. Explain your problem to the psychiatrist. It all begins when you drink orange juice. After about 15 minutes, you think that you hear birds singing. After about 20 minutes, you begin to want to eat worms. Then you feel yourself growing feathers. Your stomach begins to grow and you do not understand what is happening to you. You look like a giant orange, except that you have a beak and large feet. You open and close your mouth, but it seems strange to you. You want to sing! You do strange things, like jump and see your feet leave the ground! You are beginning to lose your self-esteem. Can the psychiatrist help bring you back to normal?

### **Trash**

You wake up one morning and find that you are in a big, white, plastic sack. You hit the sack and hurt your hand because it runs into something hard. It really smells in there! You begin to look around. You can't really see very much because there is hardly any light coming in. You keep stepping on gross, squishy things. You walk by a piece of wilted lettuce and close your eyes because it looks so disgusting. You lose your way. You begin to think that you are in a trash sack! You come to the end of the wall, and try to drive the toy car you found out of the sack. You would prefer to be big! You want to leave but you cannot because you are too small. Call someone on your cell phone and tell them to bring you a ladder because you have to leave before you get sick!

### **Pet Pig**

You have a pet pig. One day, you are walking your pig when all of a sudden, he smells some food. He charges after the food, dragging you with him. Eventually, he breaks his leash. You lose sight of him for a few minutes. When you discover him, he is destroying a nearby grocery store. The grocer has called the dog catcher, who is chasing the pig. When you enter the grocery store, the pig is being carted off to the dog pound and a police officer begins to issue you a ticket. Explain what happened to the police officer and be sure to tell him that the dogs will eat the pig if he does not stop the dogcatcher immediately.

### **Passports**

You just had your picture taken for your passport. However, every time you have had your picture taken lately, the pictures are of a gorilla instead of you. Call the doctor and explain the problem. Find out if you are permanently a gorilla, or only on Saturdays. See if he can get you into Mexico on an animal permit since you cannot get your passport processed. Tell him that you would still like to receive your complimentary bag of peanuts and your can of pop, even if you have to ride with the baggage.

### **Ice Sculpture**

You are trapped inside an ice sculpture. You are freezing and are only able to breathe because of an air pocket inside the sculpture. Get your host to realize that you are stuck and explain the situation to him. Tell him not to use hot water to get you out because he will burn you by doing so. Tell him not to use a hammer because he will give you a concussion. Give your host at least one suggestion as to how he can get you out.

### **Help!**

You are walking down the icy street when you suddenly fall and cannot get up. You press 911 on your cellular phone, but it is busy. Call the Batphone and explain to Batman that you are at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Simón Bolívar Boulevard and that a great big semi-truck is about to run over you. Tell him that you have always been one of his biggest fans and that while you hate to impose, you wonder if he could schedule a two-minute rescue into his day.

### **The Fly and the Bug**

You wake up and discover that you are a fly and that your best friend is a bug. Your friend has insulted you by saying that you are dirty and a moocher. When you asked him why he was being mean to you, he said it was because you had made fun of the fact that he slept under rugs. Call your mom and explain the situation to her. Ask if she will bring a shoe to squash your unreasonable friend.

### **Worms**

Your baby brother is playing in the garden. You are babysitting. Suddenly you notice that he is eating worms—brown ones. Suddenly he develops a pink and brown polka-dotted rash. Call the doctor and find out if the worms are poisonous and what you should do with the baby. Explain that you will be grounded for letting him eat worms. Finally, ask if the rash could be caused by the new skin cream that you used on him in order to get the dirt off of him.

### **It's Alive!**

The ice cream in your freezer is alive. It is seeping out of the freezer, has filled the kitchen, and is freezing everything it touches. Call the local scientist's organization and find out if you should pour hot water on it, blow dry it, turn up your heat, or leave the house. Ask the organization if its scientists can reanimate you if the ice cream accidentally touches you and freezes you. Ask the organization to send a consultant.

### **Air**

You are feeling very strange. You cannot feel your body and you realize that you are no longer driving your car. You think maybe you have been in a car crash and that you are dead. You begin to look around and understand that you are in a hole that is square and dark. You come to a place where you think that you can see light. You want to leave. When you think about it, you realize that you are out of there. But when you look back, you see that there are only slits. You were in a vent shaft! You come to a window, however, and cannot get out. You have lost your identity! You are air!

### **Giant Ants**

You are being attacked by a giant ant in your home. Call the local university and explain the situation to their resident ant expert. Tell them that the ant accidentally got into some of your homemade, super strong fertilizer. Explain that the fertilizer is made from eggs, milk, flour, mud, water, and vitamin C. Ask the ant expert if the ant will eat you or only trample you to death. Find out if it was the vitamin C that made the ant grow, and ask if it would make you a giant if you took too much.

### **The Cartoon**

You awake one morning and discover that you are a cartoon. Your clothes are two-dimensional—like paper doll clothes. All the people around you jump off of cliffs and into rivers and never die. It is also very noisy. That is okay, however, because you only have one ear. You notice that you are  $\frac{1}{2}$  black and white and  $\frac{1}{2}$  other colors, but that everyone else looks normal. Additionally, you realize that you cannot move. Call the artist and explain the situation. Tell the artist that you will go on strike if he doesn't finish you immediately. Tell him that if he were any good, he would have made you animated. Let him know that he had better not think about erasing you or else you'll pull out your ACME animation kit, animate yourself, and punch him in the nose.

### **The Rainbow**

One day you wake up and discover that you can see over the clouds and that your head is getting wet. You finally realize that somehow you have become the color green in a rainbow. You are enjoying yourself immensely until suddenly, you feel your lower extremity being tugged violently. When you look down, you realize that a little orange leprechaun is trying to steal you so that he can make a new green shirt, trousers, and hat from you. Explain the situation to Blue and Yellow. Ask them to hold onto you while you work things out with the leprechaun. Tell the leprechaun that stealing a piece of a rainbow is a low-down, ornery thing to do and that you will suck up all of his gold if he doesn't leave you alone immediately.